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Spring/Summer 1996



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FOCUS

Spring/Summer 1996

MONTANA INDEPENDENT LIVING PROJECT

96-2 & 3

INTERESTED IN ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT?

ATTEND THE THIRD ANNUAL MONTECH ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT FAIR

MonTECH and the Developmental Disabilities Program of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services are hosting the third annual MonTECH Adaptive Equipment Fair in conjunction with the seventeenth annual Montana Conference on Developmental Disabilities. The "Tech Fair" will be held in the Copper Dome of the Best Western Copper King Park Hotel in Butte from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday, September 25th and 26th. Other events taking place in the Copper Dome in conjunction with the Tech Fair include the DD Conference Trade Show and the Silent Auction/Art Exhibit.

Anyone with an interest in adaptive equipment is encouraged to attend! Admission is free and there will be free food and beverages available for everyone who attends events in the Copper Dome.

In past adaptive equipment fairs, vendors have demonstrated products such as adaptive wheelchairs, voice synthesizers, state of the art communication and computer access equipment, wheelchair mounts, adapted environmental controls, adaptive

switches, audio enhancement devices, etc. It is too early to know what vendors will be offering at this year's fair, but we expect that a large number of Montana-based and national vendors will attend to demonstrate and/or display their products.

Sleeping rooms will be available at the state rate of \$31.20 for singles and 49.92 for double occupancy rooms, including tax. Attendees are responsible for making their own reservations and should let the reservation desk know they are attending the Montana Conference on Developmental Disabilities. Other motels offering state rates are: Best Western Copper King Park Hotel, 4655 Harrison Ave., 800-332-8600; Butte, Plaza Inn, 2900 Harrison Ave., 406-494-8850; Town House Inn, 2777 Harrison Ave., 406-494-8850; War Bonnet Inn, 2100 Cornell Ave., 406-494-7800.

If you have any questions regarding the Tech Fair, the types of equipment that will be there, or if there is a specific type of equipment you want to see demonstrated, please call Perry Jones or John Zeck at 406-444-2995.

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS ARE JUST AROUND THE CORNER!

- Make a difference! Participate in the election process!
- Are you registered to vote? If not, CILs can now help people with disabilities register to vote. Call MILP for assistance! 1-800-735-6457 (Voice/TDD) FAX: 406-442-1612
- Vote for the candidates who will support and strengthen the Americans with Disabilities Act; support housing, public transportation, and Medicaid issues; and, most of all, support freedom from discrimination
- Watch for our October issue of *FOCUS*. We will be interviewing candidates on disability issues.

A VIEW FROM THE BOARD

By Helen Conroy

My name is Helen Conroy and I have been a MILP Board member since 1993. I am a Social Worker at Wheatland Memorial Hospital and Nursing Home in Harlowton, Montana. I have been involved with assisting people to meet financial and social needs since 1969. Because our community is very rural, access to resources is limited. I work to provide or obtain services for the elderly and people with disabilities, working closely with Human and Family Services, Voc Rehab, Social Security, Low Vision, Medical Staff, Senior Centers, MILP, and others. I am fortunate that throughout the twenty-plus years I have worked with consumers who were in need of some type of assistance, I have acquired knowledge of the resources that are accessible and appropriate for our "needy" rural people.

Being aware of appropriate resources is just the beginning. Being able to acquire and apply the assistance is a challenging and sometimes impossible task. Rural people often have great difficulty in going out of their communities to access needed resources, even though they are available "somewhere." "Harlo" is over 100 miles from any other town of size, such as Bozeman, Helena, Billings, and Great Falls. Many of my clients live on a very modest, fixed monthly income and have very limited ability to travel out of our community. Many do not drive. There is no accessible

(Continued on page 5)

PLEASE HELP US!!

MILP now has openings for people who want to serve on our Board of Directors. People with disabilities or who have family members with disabilities or who are interested in disability issues are encouraged to apply. MILP is a non-profit service agency that provides assistance to Montanans with disabilities. Our purpose is to promote the development and expansion of community-based services which directly facilitate the independence, productivity, and quality of life for people with disabilities. MILP is governed by a consumer-controlled Board of Directors.

We serve the 14 counties in southwestern Montana listed below. Anyone is welcome to apply, but we are most interested in receiving applications from people living in the counties listed in bold: Beaverhead, **Broadwater**, **Gallatin**, **Granite**, **Jefferson**, Lewis and Clark, **Madison**, **Meagher**, **Park**, **Powell**, Silver Bow, **Sweetgrass**, or Wheatland.

Interested? Contact us to request an information package and application. Call 406-442-5755 (Helena) or 1-800-735-6457 (VOICE or TDD); FAX: 406-442-1612; or E-mail milpinfo@initco.net.

FOCUS is a newsletter for people interested in the development, improvement, and expansion of community-based services which directly facilitate the independence, productivity and quality of life for people with disabilities. It is published four times a year by Montana Independent Living Project.

Staff: Jim Meldrum, Executive Director Raelen Williard, Editor

Board of Directors: Jim Hosking, President; Jim Nys, Vice President; Sylvia Stevens, Treasurer; Helen Conroy, Pat McNeill, Tracey Reighard, John Shea, Grace Sicotte, Sylvia Stevens, and Richard Woollett.

FOCUS is also available in these formats: LARGE PRINT, Braille, Audio cassette, and computer diskette. CALL TO REQUEST ALTERNATIVE FORMAT!

Inquiries, comments and changes of addresses should be addressed to: **FOCUS**, Montana Independent Living Project, 38 South Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59601; 406-442-5755 or 800-735-6457 (voice, TDD).

CMCD WORKS FOR MONTANANS WITH DISABILITIES

The Coalition of Montanans Concerned with Disabilities was incorporated in 1992 as a Montana non-profit corporation; it continues as a state-wide grassroots direct action disability rights organization comprised of individuals, chapters, and organizations. Its mission is to promote the equal participation of all Montanans in all aspects of society through the collective empowerment of people with disabilities.

CMCD believes that people with disabilities are perhaps the most impoverished and disempowered group in Montana and the such injustice will only be changed by the growth of local organizations owned by, and dedicated to, the empowerment of people with disabilities. CMCD continues to work to organize the disability community at the grassroots level to engage in direct action campaigns designed to bring about long-term system changes. We believe that people with disabilities must be able to make their own decisions and choices, but that they often lack access to the necessary resources and to society for this to occur.

On April 13th, CMCD held its Annual Meeting and emerged with eight new board members and an approved State Platform that will determine much of our statewide work over the rest of this year.

The statewide issues that the board voted on at the annual meeting are:

Building Codes: CMCD proposed a campaign to ensure enforceable accessibility codes at the state level. Even though the Montana Human Rights commission has proposed new regulations that will incorporate the vast majority of the ADA's requirements under existing law, these potential changes will not fix the problem Montana has with building code enforcement. Under existing law, the Building Codes Bureau does not have the authority to inspect new construction projects for accessibility with regard to parking and exterior pathways. A legislative change is needed to address this problem.

Medicaid: During the upcoming legislative session and throughout the year, CMCD proposes to monitor and respond to changes in the Medicaid program at the federal and state levels to ensure that Montanans with disabilities have a say in how the state enacts any federal mandate. The proposals cur-

rently being discussed potentially weaken the program's historic protections for low and moderate income people, and threaten to result in significant cutbacks in service. Each state would be given the authority to decide the amount, duration, and scope of the health services for persons insured under the program, without any meaningful federal standards or guidelines. Optional services may once again be in jeopardy. It is possible to broaden state flexibility and still achieve savings without weakening the health care safety net, if care is taken to balance various interests and goals.

Affordable, Accessible Housing: CMCD is in a position to support Montana People's Action agenda item of establishing a Housing Trust Fund (HTF). HTFs are funds with dedicated sources of funding which are set aside specifically to provide resources for local and state housing needs.

Braille Bill: The Montana Association for the Blind is planning to re-introduce a state Braille Bill. Similar to bills that have passed in 29 states, this bill requires all elementary and secondary schools to teach Braille to children who are blind. It also requires these schools to purchase all their textbooks only from manufacturers who provide textbooks in alternative formats.

As we head into a busy, exciting year and as CMCD grows into a powerful statewide organization, we need new active members! To learn more about CMCD or how you can get involved, please call the state office at 406-243-5944 and ask for an information packet. Or attend a meeting in the town closest to you.

Regularly scheduled local chapter meetings:

Billings: 4th Thursday of every month, 2:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. at LIFTT, Broadwater Square

Bozeman: 2nd Wednesday of every month, 12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m. at the Senior Center, Tamarack Rd., Bozeman

Butte: Meetings resume in the fall; contact person, Barbara Giovanini, 782-6882.

Great Falls & Helena - No regular meetings yet but we need people who want to get something going in these communities!

SUMMER RECREATION...ENJOY MONTANA'S GREAT OUTDOORS!

...Welcome to Sheepshead! Forest Recreation for All People

Sheepshead Mountain Recreation Area is for picnics, games, hiking, fishing, and enjoying nature. But mostly, Sheepshead is for people. This area makes forest recreation available to everyone in a universally accessible setting.

Sheepshead is an expanse of grassy meadows and sagebrush with several streams and a small lake, all surrounded by lodgepole pine forest. The area features pavilions, picnic tables, barbecue grills, horseshoes, a fishing pier, nature trail, volleyball court, ball fields, and paved trails.

One element of the area is "A Sense of the Wild Nature Trail." The trail has information about plants, animals, and forest ecosystems and seven points of interest, each with a sign and an audio message. The trail is accessible to nearly everyone and will take about an hour to complete. It was built in partnership with Access Montana, the Kiwanis Club of South Butte, and the Sheepshead Working Group.

In 1970, the Montana Association for the Blind asked the Deerlodge National Forest to help them find a place where people with vision disabilities could enjoy outdoor activities. Together, they chose the Sheepshead site. As planning progressed, it became clear that other disabilities besides blindness exclude people from outdoor recreation. Sheepshead planners broadened their vision to include accessibility adaptations for everyone. After 12 years of information gathering, design, land acquisition and construction, the idea became a reality. Sheepshead was dedicated and opened in September, 1983.

The Sheepshead dream came true because so many people believed in it. The Sheepshead Working Group, made up of local service groups, government agencies, and caring individuals, gave many hours to fund raising, public awareness, and pick-and-shovel sweat. The Working Group and other volunteers continue to support, maintain and improve the area.

To find Sheepshead, travel 13 miles north from Butte on Interstate 15. Go east at exit 138, the Elk Park Interchange, and follow the signs for 6 miles

to Sheepshead. Turn at the Freedom Point Entrance to locate the universally accessible parking and other features. The public is always welcome but Sheepshead is also a great place for weddings, receptions, family and other group picnics. From June to Labor Day, you can reserve a pavilion for a small fee. For more information, a map, or to make reservations, contact: Deerlodge National Forest, Butte Ranger District, 1820 Meadowlark Lane, PO Box 3840, Butte, Montana 59703, 406--494-2147.

... Easy Camping on the Madison River

Did you think that camping is only for people who are rough, tough, and prepared for anything? Well, it's not true! Bakers Hole Campground was just renovated and now at least half of the sites are universally accessible. That means that they are easier to use by everyone, including your grandparents, someone pushing an eight-month-old baby in a stroller, your friend who is on crutches because of a late-season ski accident, and a person who uses a wheelchair. Many sites now have smooth, level continuous gravel surfaces that extend all the way from your parking spur to around your picnic table and fire ring. Toilets are now larger and brighter and easier to use. (And they also smell better!!) The fire rings are easier to use since you don't have to bend down so far to build your fire.

And since Bakers Hole Campground is right next to the Madison River where it borders Yellowstone National Park, an easy-to-use fishing trail and fishing platforms await you. You'll find a bench at each fishing platform where you can set your tackle box or your creel full of trout you'll catch!

You can end each day here cozying up to the warmth of your campfire while you enjoy the views of the setting sun lighting up the Gallatin Mountains as they are reflected in the Madison River that quietly flows past on its way to Hebgen Lake. Bakers Hole is located north of the town of West Yellowstone on Montana State Highway 191. To reserve a campsite, call 800-280-CAMP (Voice) or 1-800-879-4496 (TDD). For more information, contact the Hebgen Lake Ranger District at 406-646-7369. (Voice/TDD)

...Gallatin National Forest Campgrounds Now Accepting Reservations

Dave Garber, Gallatin National Forest Supervisor, invites campers to "Come enjoy camping in your national forest," in any of the Gallatin's 37 developed campgrounds. Twelve Forest Service campgrounds in the Bozeman and Hebgen Lake area are now accepting advance reservations. In addition to the reservable sites, these twelve campgrounds have other sites available on a first-come, first-served basis. The remaining 25 campgrounds on the Gallatin National Forest are available on a first-come, first served basis.

A free pamphlet, "Gallatin National Forest Camp and Picnic Guide," describes all of the forest's campgrounds. Contact ranger district offices listed below for information on fees, campground size, reservations, and additional information about accessible features, including whether campgrounds have any accessible campsites, pathways, picnic tables, toilets, or accessible recreation sites (fishing, swimming, etc.) nearby.

Contact any of the following Gallatin National Forest Ranger District Offices:

Big Timber Ranger District, Highway 10 East, PO Box 196, Big Timber, MT 59011-0196, 406-932-5155 (voice and TDD); **Bozeman Ranger District**, 3710 Fallon Street, Bozeman, MT 59715, 406-587-6920 (voice and TDD); **Gardiner Ranger District**, Highway 89, PO Box 5, Gardiner, MT 59030, 406-848-7375 (voice and TDD); **Hebgen Lake Ranger District**, Highway 191, PO Box 520, West Yellowstone, MT 59758, 406-646-7369 (voice and TDD); **Livingston Ranger District**, 5342 Highway 89 South, Livingston, MT 59047, 406-222-1892 (voice and TDD).

VIEW FROM THE BOARD

(Continued from Page 2)

transportation. In fact, there is no mode of public transportation-no air travel or train-not even bus service.

In addition to physical isolation common to rural settings, other factors contribute to the problems of access to the resources people need to survive and/or enhance their quality of life. Weather conditions-extreme cold and snow in the winter and heat in the summer-limit access. Service providers have

trouble paying personal visits to people because of the distances between towns and people. Even one or two visits a month can quickly drain travel budgets. Additionally, the emphasis on self-reliance necessary to survive in rural areas sometimes decreases clients' receptivity to outsiders. Finally, there is a great need for the Federal Government to make a commitment and specifically address the needs of our rural disabled and elderly populations.

We are fortunate to have a very good medical facility and staff at Wheatland Memorial. However due to potential funding cuts and copious rules and regulations, it will be a challenge to keep our facility operating as it is today.

MILP provides assistance and independent living services to our rural communities, covering 14 counties and approximately 31,000 square miles. Some of the "living" services include: advocacy, independent living skills training, peer counseling, assistance with home accessibility adaptations, access to equipment and assistive technology, information and referral, and ADA information and accessibility audits. These are services that enhance the independence, productivity, and quality of life for people in need. MILP has been a tremendous resource to me in meeting the needs of people in our community. MILP's director and staff are a very caring, dedicated and trustworthy group. It is an honor and privilege to serve on the MILP board.

FELLOWSHIPS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is pleased to announce the ELA Foundation fellowship for graduate students with disabilities. This fellowship is to encourage and support graduate students in their career development in public policy and public information related to disability. The first fellowship will be awarded this October. Applications must be received by September 18, 1996.

A copy of the fellowship announcement and application is available from MILP (800-735-6457) or directly from the The President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 1331 F Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20004-1107; 202-376-6200 (v); 202-376-6205 (TDD); or 202-376-6219 (FAX).

UNIVERSAL ACCESS 2000 PROMOTING ADA COMPLIANCE IN MONTANA

The Universal Access 2000 (UA2000) Program, designed to encourage the implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), is sponsored by Meeting the Challenge, the Federal Region VIII ADA Disability and Business Technical Assistance Center (DBTAC).

The purpose of UA 2000 is to decentralize the availability of ADA information resources in the six-state area that the DBTAC serves. Folks throughout Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming are signing up to be representatives of this program for their local communities. These ADA Local Affiliates (LAs), as they are called, can be individuals, businesses, or employees of agencies or organizations.

The services they offer are as varied as their backgrounds. All ADA Local Affiliates provide free information and referrals in response to ADA questions. Many give presentations and workshops or organize local interest/advocacy groups. Others offer additional fee-based services such as facility access surveys and consulting on self-evaluation and implementation plans.

LAs receive no pay for their efforts, but Meeting the Challenge does provide the LAs resource materials, lots of training, and immediate access to the most up-to-date information and publications.

Is this program working? We think it is! Changes happen slowly in rural areas, but in many small towns, there are ramps where previously there were only stairs, businesses with improved access to rest rooms, curb cuts, and TDDs at businesses and local government agencies. But there is more to do!

There are now approximately 80 Local Affiliates throughout the six-state Rocky Mountain Region. Montana alone has 21 Local Affiliates located in Ballantine, Billings, Black Eagle, Bozeman, Butte, Glendive, Great Falls, Hamilton, Havre, Helena, Kalispell, Missoula, Plentywood, Polson, and Ronan. These Local Affiliates are all committed to seeing that changes continue to happen so that someday universal access to communities will be a reality.

If you want to: Learn more about the UA 2000 Program; Meet the LA in your community; Be an LA if your community doesn't have one; or Help

people comply with the ADA; call Raelen Williard, MT UA 2000 contact person, at Montana Independent Living Project at 1-800-735-6457 (Voice or TDD), FAX: 406-442-1612 or E-mail milpinfo@initco.net.

THOUGHTS ON ADVOCACY

Advocacy...The American Heritage Dictionary says that advocacy is active support of a cause, idea, or policy. For many of us, it takes on a much wider meaning. Advocacy can be... organizing meetings...sending out an Action Alert on legislation...finding the right piece of equipment for someone-and then getting it to them...being there to listen...lending a helping hand...through information... a phone call here...a letter there...woven throughout our days.

Raelen Williard, MILP, Helena

Here's some other thoughts on advocacy...

Advocacy means assisting persons to help themselves. Each of us rehab ourselves and sometimes we need an "advocate"--someone to help us along the way.

Carl Newton, VR/DPHHS, Kalispell office

Advocacy, it has many forms such as self-advocacy, personal advocacy, systems advocacy, and legal advocacy and the dictionary definitions are simple and clear. Speaking or acting on behalf of oneself or another. But for me, real advocacy is helping! Stepping forward and using your knowledge, common sense, and experience to solve a problem or right a wrong.

John Borgreen, AgrAbility Project, Great Falls

Advocacy means we're all in this together to get things accomplished for each other...to advocate for changes that will make life easier and consequently better.

Claudia Driscoll, Helena

**HERE'S YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO DISPLAY
at the 3rd annual
MONTANA ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT TECHNOLOGY FAIR**

WHEN: September 25-26, 1996 (Wednesday and Thursday), 1996, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

WHERE: The Copper Dome at the Copper King Park Hotel, Butte, MT

(The Copper Dome is a 24,000 Sq. Ft. inflated facility with an air lock loading dock for truck bed unloading.)

The "Adaptive Tech Fair" (private for-profit vendors), will be joined by a trade show (not-for-profit providers), a related art show, and free food and beverages. The Fair is designed to draw approximately 550 participants into the Copper Dome-people interested in adaptive equipment and others who are attending the Montana Conference on Developmental Disabilities held at the same time.

DEADLINES:

September 1, 1996 (intentions);

September 10, 1996 for receipt of registration form, payment, and/or materials for display.

(Materials for display must be sent to the conference coordinator. Materials sent late or to the hotel cannot be guaranteed display space.)

RESERVATIONS: On-Site Materials and Display: Contact John Zeeck or Perry Jones 406-444-2995 in Helena MT, Developmental Disabilities Program, Department of Public Health and Human Services, P.O. Box 4210, Helena, MT 59604.

HOTEL: Sleeping rooms (Vendors make your own reservations and ask for state rates.) Copper King Park Hotel, 1-800-332-8600 State rates: \$31.20, single; \$49.92 double, taxes included

____ **YES, I WANT TO DISPLAY AT THE ADAPTIVE TECH FAIR:**
AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Display Rates:	In-State Vendor	Out-of-State Vendor
Materials Display only	*\$ 25.00/day	\$ 50.00/day
On-Site Display	**\$ 50.00/day	\$100.00/day

* vendor sends materials to Conference Coordinator and CC sets up one table for vendor

** vendor comes on-site and gets 1-2 eight-foot tables with skirting and power

COMPANY NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE #: _____ **FAX #:** _____

DESCRIPTION OF PRODUCSTS/SERVICES TO BE DISPLAYED: _____

CHECK ONE: _____ **MATERIALS DISPLAY** _____ **ON-SITE DISPLAY**

CIRCLE NUMBER OF TABLES NEEDED: 1 2 **POWER OUTLET:** ____YES ____NO

SPECIAL NEEDS: _____

Enclosed is my registration form and check for payment.

Make check payable to: MONTANA DD CONFERENCE Mail to: 1996 MT Conference on Developmental Disabilities, DDP/DPHHS, P.O. Box 4210, Helena, MT 59604.

FOR SALE

Power Wheelchair, Fortress Scientific 655, about 6 years old with 2 years of use, new batteries, rebuilt controls, rear & hand controls, heavy duty, runs like new, \$3500 OBO, call Belgrade, 406-338-4776.

Jennings wheelchair, standard adult seat, 18" wide, 16" deep & 16 1/2" high; P in amp-changer; standard foot rest, chrome finish; \$2500 OBO; call Great Falls, 406-454-0843.

1989 27' Bounder Motor Home; excellent shape & low mileage; Has winch to lift person in plus inside installed track to use remote controlled winch to put person in bed or at dining table or passenger seat; must see to appreciate. Will dicker. **Seat lift reclining chair**, electric, brown in color, excellent condition, \$500.00. **Wheelchair carrier**, fits on rear bumper hitch, with wheelchair cover, excellent condition, \$200.00. **Custom Wheelchair-Active Aid**, with Whitmeyer head restraint, removable cushions, will fold for travel with removable wheels, \$750.00. **Folding wheelchair** made by

Rolls, with seat belts, leg belts, asking \$250.00. **Teldyne water pik, power tooth brush**, have 3 power handles with extra brushes and one power charging unit, \$30.00. For information, Call Lester in Butte at 494-7661.

WANTED TO PURCHASE

Accessible van, call Wade in Great Falls at 452-7916.

Used power chair; contact Susan at 587-0489 in Bozeman; if no answer, leave a message and suggest a good time to call back.

WANTED TO RENT IN HELENA AREA

Responsible, mature, single adult wants to rent a small one-bedroom house or cottage in a very quiet location, away from the noise of traffic, construction, etc.. Will consider areas within 15 minutes of downtown Helena. Please call: Allen at 449-5939



**MONTANA INDEPENDENT
LIVING PROJECT**

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MONTANA INDEPENDENT LIVING PROJECT

March 1996

96-1

NEW STANDARDS FOR WHEELCHAIRS IN THE WORKS

Subcommittee's Goal Is Safer Travel For People With Disabilities

It's not news that wheelchairs aren't designed to be crashworthy or to be used as seats in moving vehicles. Yet people with disabilities have no other choice than to do just that if they are unable to transfer from their wheelchair to a vehicle seat. This usually means that they cannot use the safety belts installed by the vehicle manufacturer to provide protection in a crash. In addition, the wheelchair must be secured to the vehicle to keep it from moving around in a collision or sudden maneuver. This safety issue was discussed in "Are You In The HOT SEAT?," an article by Wendy Caster in the September 1995 issue of *Mainstream* (good magazine!).

Ms. Caster states that no one knows how many people are injured in automobile accidents because of wheelchair failure. No one keeps those kinds of statistics. It is known, though, that in the U.S. between 1986-90, 3,774 wheelchair users were injured in 'motor vehicle-related accidents.' But no one knows how many of the injuries, if any, were caused by wheelchair failure. She quotes Invacare, one of the biggest makers of wheelchairs, which claims that the incidence of injuries caused by wheelchair failure in motor vehicle accidents "has been zero, although people have been hurt because their wheelchairs were improperly fastened to the motor vehicle in which they were riding."

Since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has encouraged so many more people who use wheelchairs to get out and about, one might wonder if anyone is addressing this safety issue.

The good news is that the Subcommittee on

Wheelchairs and Transportation (SOWHAT) of the American National Standards Institute/Rehabilitation Engineering Society of North America (ANSI/RESNA) is taking the first step and is working to set safety guidelines for wheelchairs used in public and private transportation vehicles. (ANSI sets standards for all types of things, including accessibility of building.)

SOWHAT's goals include: "delineating design specifications and test strategies for wheelchairs for both children and adults, specifying the locations and strengths of points on wheelchairs to which securement systems can be attached, and establishing guidelines as to how batteries, motors, trays, and other accessories should be secured for safety in accidents." The Subcommittee hopes to have standards in place for wheelchairs used as seats in motor vehicles and for wheelchair tiedown and occupant restraint systems for use in motor vehicles by the summer of 1997.

To comment on safety issues and concerns or to find out more about the Subcommittee's activities, contact SOWHAT member: Dr. Douglas A. Hobson, University of Pittsburg, 5050 Forbes Tower, Pittsburg, PA 15260, 412-647-1274.

What can you do now to make motorized transportation of wheelchair users safer? The author quotes Dr. Hobson, who says "...using a belt type system (for tie-downs) with an existing wheelchair is much, much better than nothing ... we encourage people to use occupant restraint systems ... as you know, in many states, people have to wear seat belts in motor vehicles."

(For more safety ideas, see sidebar on page 5.)

VIEW FROM THE BOARD

My name is Glenn Jorgenson and I have been on the Board of Directors for MILP since 1992. I have served as the treasurer since 1993. I am a certified public accountant and work for the City of Helena as a budget analyst. Since I have been on the board, MILP has gone through many changes, many of which could not be considered fun. I am very happy to say that MILP has only gotten stronger and better because of these "growing pains." We have a director and staff who really care about the people they are serving.

I am regretfully leaving the board after this term and can truthfully say that I will miss the people I have worked with. I hope that I have made some contribution to furthering the mission and goals of MILP during my tenure. I would like to encourage anyone who receives this newsletter who lives within MILP's 14-county service area in southwestern Montana to seriously consider applying to serve on the board. All it takes is a little time and a commitment to help others. So if you're interested in being on the MILP board, call the director, Jim Meldrum, and he'll tell you more about what is involved.

Even if you don't have the desire to be on the board now, please let MILP know that you appreciate the work they are doing for you and everyone else in the communities throughout southwestern Montana, and be ready to support them in their many projects.

I would like to thank the board and staff of MILP for all of your hard work the last few years!

FRIENDS By Teresa Gardner

Roses are red, Violets are blue
Friends are hard to come by,
so I'm glad I found you.
Friends always care when
no one else is there.
When friends are in despair,
I know you'll always be there.

So don't think friends don't care,
Cause when you think things are unfair,
Look over your shoulder and
a friend will always be there.

WANTED: ADA SUCCESS STORIES

Slowly but surely things are changing. An example: A recent bill from my long distance telephone carrier, TRI Touch America, included the following question: Do you want larger type on your bill? (The question was printed in large print bold sans serif type, too!) This may seem like a small change, but it is a big one for people with visual impairments (and others who squint a bit at small print).

Have you seen other positive changes in policies or access? Send a note or call Raelen at MILP by April 19th and they'll be included in our next issue of *FOCUS*.

Let's compliment those businesses or organizations that go out of their way to comply with ADA and provide equal access for all!

FOCUS is a newsletter for people interested in the development, improvement, and expansion of community-based services which directly facilitate the independence, productivity and quality of life for people with disabilities. It is published four times a year by Montana Independent Living Project.

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MILP OFFERS ADA TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Montana Independent Living Project (MILP) is now offering free training and technical assistance to all open Vocational Rehabilitation clients or former clients within our 14-county service area who are eligible for post-employment services in the areas listed below. People residing in other areas of Montana can apply for similar services through their closest IL center. (Call MILP if you need a phone number for the IL Center that serves your area!)

The Americans with disabilities Act (ADA) and how it applies to you. An overview of the ADA, with the primary focus on how it applies to employment, will be presented. This topic will be covered in small groups or individually, upon request.

Enhancing training and employment opportunities. This training will focus on individual issues that make training and employment difficult. Barriers to employment and training will be identified and problem-solved. How much to disclose about one's disability, how to request necessary accommodations from employers and schools, how to handle illegal questions and how to explain lapses in employment will be addressed. Practice interviews and

role playing will be used when appropriate. This training will be provided to small groups or individually upon request.

Technical assistance is available for individuals with specific employment issues such as identifying and requesting job accommodations or dealing with the individual to identify possible solutions for their particular situation.

Group training and presentations will be scheduled throughout the year in Butte, Bozeman, and Helena. Group sessions will have two to six participants each.

Training facilities will be physically accessible. We request at least two weeks notice for additional accommodations such as interpreters, other communication aids, or alternate format materials.

If you are a VR/VS client or former client and want to sign up for training or technical assistance, first contact your VR/VS counselor to refer you to the program. Then call Les Clark at MILP to schedule the training or technical assistance that is most suitable for you.

MILP's phone number is 406-442-5755 or 800-735-6457.

LOW INTEREST LOANS AVAILABLE

The Montana Board of Housing will continue to offer loans at reduced interest rates to people with mobility impairments as one of their permanent programs. The goals of the Disabled Accessible Affordable Homeownership Program (DAAHP) are to provide affordable architecturally accessible homes for people with disabilities so that they can live independently and, over the long term, to ensure the availability of more accessible housing on the market.

This program will provide \$3,500,000 available statewide for 30-year mortgages with a fixed mortgage rate, depending on the annual gross income of the family residing in the home. The interest rates range from 2.75% to 6.5%, depending on the maximum gross annual family income after exclusions for certain disability-related

expenses. Money is available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Homebuyers whose income is \$25,000 or less may apply for a second loan of up to \$2,000 to help pay the downpayment and closing costs. There will be no payment due on the second loan until the first mortgage is paid off or the property is sold.

For more information or to obtain a program application, contact a home loan officer at any bank that provides home loans. For a program description or if you have specific questions on the DAAHP, contact Bob Morgan at Montana Board of Housing, 2001 11th Avenue, PO Box 200528, Helena, MT 59620-0528, Phone: 406-444-3040 or TDD: 406-444-2978.

MEET THE AGRABILITY PROJECT

The EIEIO Project (Empowering Individuals with disabilities through Education, Information, and Opportunity) has changed its name. The Montana-Idaho AgrAbility Project will simply be called AgrAbility. Emphasis continues to be on assisting farm, ranch, and other rural folks and their families to move forward in spite of disability. A new brochure depicting the name change and providing a more comprehensive list of services is now available on request. This name change follows the appointment of Tom Scott as Project Director in April 1995.

AgrAbility provides technical expertise in rural settings, from household modification to shop, farmstead, and machinery adaptation. Problem-solving tasks of the Project are done in consultation with Independent Living, Vocational Rehabilitation, and health care providers around the state. The Project with Easter Seal-Extension Service collaboration is nationally funded by the United States Department of Agriculture as authorized in the Farm Bill. In Montana, AgrAbility can be contacted in the following ways:

- Tom Scott, Project Director
Montana State University
220 Roberts Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717 406-994-1891
800-523-4342
- John Borgreen, AgrAbility Case Manager
Easter Seals
2022 Central Avenue
Great Falls, MT 59401 406-771-0026

ADA AND RURAL BUSINESSES

MILP now has copies of the brochure, "Improving Your Rural Business with the ADA." This small brochure is loaded with information on the Americans with Disabilities Act and practical solutions for compliance for rural businesses.

To request a free copy, call Raelen at MILP today at 406-444-5755 or 1-800-735-6457.

"TALKING PICTURES" AVAILABLE

What is new about 'Talking Pictures'? They have been around for years!! Unfortunately, if you are blind or visually impaired, most movies do not 'talk' enough. Can you imagine how frustrating it would be to be able to hear, but not see a TV show or a movie and try to guess what is happening between the dialogue. What is the person wearing? Are they old/young/beautiful/ugly? Who just hit/shot/kissed whom?

If you avoid watching a television program or a video because you cannot see well enough to keep track of what is happening, perhaps you need to know more about Descriptive Video Services (DVS). DVS adds narrative descriptions to television broadcasts and videos describing the action, facial expressions, and other visual elements without interfering with the dialogue.

For you to receive descriptive narrative of television broadcasts, your local public television station must offer it. In addition, you need either a stereo television or a VCR that includes the Second Audio Program (S.A.P.) feature. Most televisions produced since 1994 have this feature. You can also purchase an S.A.P. receiver that enables your existing TV set to receive S.A.P. and DVS. If your public television station does not carry DVS, call and let them know that you would like to receive DVS in your area.

Videos with descriptive narrative do not require any special equipment and will play on a standard VCR. These videos may be purchased from: Descriptive Video Service, WGBH, 125 Western Ave., Boston, Massachusetts 02134.

The Montana Talking Book Library in Helena also has a collection of descriptive videos of popular movies which it lends to certified patrons of the library.

For further information on television broadcasts available with descriptive narrative, equipment needed to receive these broadcasts, or to purchase videos with descriptive narrative, call 1-800-333-1203.

For more information about borrowing descriptive videos from the Montana Talking Book Library, call 1-800-332-3400.

DPHHS REORGANIZATION CONTINUES

The MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) was formed on July 1, 1995, as part of a state government reorganization approved by the 1995 Legislature. DPHHS is composed of the former Dept. of Social and Rehabilitation Services, the Dept. of Family Services, and parts of the Dept. of Health and Environmental Sciences and the Dept. of Corrections and Human Services.

The agency recently underwent internal reorganization, consolidating its divisions from 13 to eight.

For more information on the DPHHS reorganization, contact Peter Blouke, agency director or any of the new administrators listed below:

MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 4210
Helena, MT 59604-4210

- Peter Blouke, DPHHS Director
(406) 444-5622

- Operations and Technology Division
Mike Billings, Director
(406) 444-5622

- Disability Services Division
Joe Mathews, Director
(406) 444-2590

- Senior and Long Term Care Division
Mike Hanshew, Director
(406) 444-4209

MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 202943
Helena, MT 59620-2943

- Child Support Enforcement Division
Mary Ann Wellbank, Director
(406) 444-6856

MT Dept. of Public Health and Human Services
P.O. Box 202951
Helena, MT 59620-2951

- Quality Assurance Division
Denzel Davis, Director
(406) 444-2037

- Addictive and Mental Disorders Division
Dan Anderson, Director
(406) 444-3964

- Health Policies and Services Division
Nancy Ellery, Director
(406) 444-4540

- Child and Family Services Division
Hank Hudson, Director
(406) 444-5900

Guidelines for the Safety of people currently using wheelchairs in Motor Vehicles **

- Wheelchairs should face forward.
- The same belt should never be used to restrain the occupant and the wheelchair, as the occupant could then be injured by being forced against the wheelchair itself. However, it is okay for the occupant to be belted to the wheelchair as long as the wheelchair is not secured to the motor vehicle by the same belt.
- Occupant restraints should be positioned across bony parts of the body, not soft tissues.
- To the extent possible, the wheelchair user should maintain a balanced upright sitting posture without sliding forward or tilting over. For some wheelchair users, additional support may be needed while in a motor vehicle.
- The wheelchair backrest may need to be raised to provide better balance and support.
- Four-belt wheelchair restraint systems are safer than two-belt systems, but all systems are better than nothing.

** In *Mainstream*, September, 1995, from: Janice Hunt, a physical therapist at the Neuro-Biology Institute of Scottsdale, AZ and Dr. Lawrence Schneider of the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute at the Eleventh International Seating Symposium in Pittsburgh for wheelchair users in motor vehicles.

(See related article on Page 1)

FOR SALE

Shower chair, Reacher, Velcro Shoe Adapters, and Egg crate mattress. For detailed descriptions and prices, call Brenda in Butte at 782-2031.

1989 27' Bouncer Motor Home; Excellent shape & low mileage; Has winch to lift person in with, plus inside installed track to use remote controlled winch to put person in bed or at dining table or passenger seat; Must see to appreciate. Will dicker.

Chrome Hoyer lift, with chains, chain bars, and slings, \$450.00. **Seat lift reclining chair,** electric, brown in color, excellent condition, \$500.00.

Wheelchair carrier, fits on rear bumper hitch, with wheelchair cover, excellent condition, \$200.00.

Custom wheelchair-Active Aid, with Whitmeyer head restraint, removable cushions, will fold for travel with removable wheels, \$750.00. **Folding wheelchair** made by Rolls, with seat belts, leg belts, asking \$250.00. **Two drinking cup holders,** one brass, other cloth straps, hangs over shoulders, pair for \$40.00 or \$20.00 each. **Teledyne water**

pik, power tooth brush, have 3 power handles with extra brushes and one power charging unit, \$30. For information, call Lester in Butte at 494-7661.

Everest Jennings Electric Wheelchair - Rarely-used, older model. For details and cost, contact Mary in Billings at 656-1583.

Wheelchair-lift equipped van - 1982 Ford, automatic transmission, Collins lift, electric door, tan with copper trim, 66,000 miles. Includes camping apparatus: sink, ice box, port-a-potty. One seat converts to a bed. Call 406-586-9302 in Bozeman.

Braun wheelchair lift - Currently loading onto bus with frame, 5'6" high by 3'3" wide and 4 feet long. Asking \$500.00 OBO. Call Michael in Libby at 293-9614.

WANTED TO BUY: Reasonably priced piano with full keyboard, prefer Spinet or upright for small space. Also need washer & dryer, preferably free. Call Steve in Wyola at 343-2622.



**MONTANA INDEPENDENT
LIVING PROJECT**

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Helena, MT 59601

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1515 E 6TH
HELENA MT 59620

